

HASTINGS PIER CHARITY

HASTINGS
PIER

St Leonards Pier Timeline



St Leonards Pier during its heydays, (HPC058.011)



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St Leonards Pier Timeline

1831-1834		James Burton, founder of the new town of St Leonards, tried but failed to raise funding for a harbour at the west end of Marina in St Leonards.
1870		The St Leonards-on-Sea Pier Company was set up and obtained the legal right to build a pier to the east of the Royal Victoria Hotel, but local opposition in 1872 stopped it happening.
1886	Sept	The St Leonards-on-Sea Pier Company was formed
1891	01-Mar	The first iron pile was screwed into the seabed for the St Leonards Pier.
1891	28-Oct	The St Leonards Pier opening ceremony took place. The pier was hailed as a masterpiece of design and construction, with its main feature being the 750-seat semi-Moorish pavilion at its landward end.
1896	Oct	Gale damage to the new St Leonards Pier smashed its timber landing stage into pieces. Some of the beams were driven along the shore to hit Hastings Pier, damaging its ironwork structure.
1909	01-Apr	The 'American Syndicate', also known as the Rinkeries, took out a lease on St Leonards Pier and carried out big improvements. It reopened on 23 May 1909 as the 'American Palace Pier' (but usually just called the 'Palace Pier'). The whole pier was painted and decorated, a new restaurant was built on the south side of the pavilion and six ornamental kiosks were erected, each accommodating three shops. About 4,000 lamps were fixed all over the pier, making it a big attraction in the evenings. In July that year a new pavilion was built as a roller skating rink at the seaward end of the pier.

1911	Spring	The Rinkeries, the managing company of St Leonards Pier, suddenly surrendered its lease. This was taken over by a small group of local people, who ran the pier until 1917.1911
1917	August	The St Leonards Pier was bought by Mr John Henry Gardner, the owner of a Welsh coal-mining business.
1927	Oct	St Leonards Pier owner John Gardner offered it for sale to Hastings Council for £9,000, but they refused. In March 1928 Gardner rented the pier to a new company, who added many bright and attractive features to it, but then gave up in early 1929. Gardner then ran the pier till 1933.
1933	Sept	Following the collapse of John Gardner's company, he sold St Leonards Pier to two London brothers, David and Philip Lannon. They carried out many major changes over the following winter, and in March 1934 it was relaunched as the 'New Palace Pier'.
1938	Sept	St Leonards Pier was not a financial success, and so it was put up for sale, but no buyer was found.
1939	03-Sept	The Second World War started, and Hastings Pier remained open initially, although with scaled-down operations. But St Leonards Pier closed and never reopened to the public.
1940	Summer	Both Hastings Pier and St Leonards Pier were taken over by the military. Both had sections about 25 yards long removed some way along them to stop invading Germans using the piers as landing stages.
1944	07-Mar	A major fire seriously damaged all the shore end of the St Leonards Pier, wrecking the pavilion and its adjoining buildings. The owners, the Lannon brothers, made no attempt to restore the pier, and it was effectively abandoned.

1951	Jan	Hastings Council gave the Lannon brothers £1,000 for St Leonards Pier and began demolishing and clearing it. Most had been removed by mid-1952, with the last piles still in the seabed being removed with explosives in the summer of 1953.
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